SPRING ACADEMY SHOW COMES

International Exhibition Just Ended Remembered as Most Stimulating Episode in City's Art Life

THE international exhibition at the armory, whose allotted term of four weeks has ended, will be remembered as the most stimulating episode in this city's art history up to the present time. Its appeal has been widespread, and while there is no doubt that the sensational performances of some of the advanced Frenchmen constituted a powerful drawing factor, attracting by their reputed novelty and extravagance, it is safe to say that even without these works the vitality and energy so freely distributed among the remaining pictures and sculpture would have secured a record breaking attendance.

This much has been settled—this town and the country at large will respond to a first rate revelation of modern work in a way that should give courage to every artist who feels that he has a significant word to contribute to the sum of to-day's message of art to the people. It has been demonstrated that the public will flock readily to a show that it can believe in. Good pictures in sufficient quantity command attention on any accessible street. Especially there is an added prestige for any artistic enterprise that honestly tries to throw off hampering custom of tradition.

The thanks of the community are due to Arthur B. Davies, Walt Kuhn and their associates of the American Painters and Sculptors, whose first public undertaking has been so truly noteworthy.

After its success in New York this exhibition goes to Chicago, almost in its entirety, for display at the Art Institute, the admirable organization which fulfils for Chicago the function of a Metropolitan Museum as well as a United Arts Building in the centre and heart of the city. Those who brought about the show in New York feel that its influence in the Western metropolis will be at least as great as here. Chicago has a hinterland so large and so alert to grasp the good in what is new that this exhibition of modern expression is expected to work something little short of an art revolution throughout the middle West.

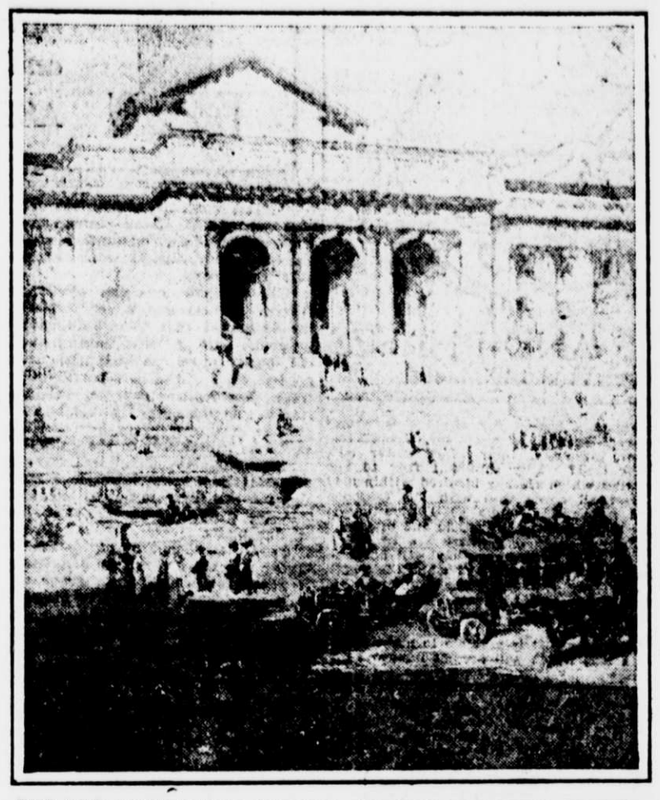
There is of course a lesson for the Academy of Design in the huge attendance that swept into the armory day after day, many of the visitors going from twice to twenty times while the international show was in progress. The academy opened yesterday at the Fine Arts Building in Fifty-seventh street its spring exhibition. Without referring to this new exhibition more than to past ones, it may be said that when the academy shows more pictures than people wish to look at its attendance will increase.

If the academy desires to lay stress upon what the new men and women are doing in a free and untrammelled way, as has been unofficially stated many times, it seems that its barriers have too often been higher than need be. The spirit of welcome to what has energy and earnestness, even though its form be not too closely akin to academy ideals, should be warmer. The tide of new and vigorous thought would flow in rapidly enough if it were allowed to do so.

Every now and then some new emphasis is laid upon the scope and accomplishment of the English portrait school of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. This time the suggestion comes through an exhibition now to be seen at the Cottier galleries of twelve pastel portraits, mostly heads, by Daniel Gardner, who flourished from 1750 to 1805.

This little collection, which is worth keeping together, it would seem, came from Lady Strachey, and was formerly the property of Lord Carlingford, who got the pastels from Anne Eliza Dixon, a granddaughter of Daniel Gardner. There is in every one of these careful yet substantial and characteristic little portraits the trace of the school, the manner adopted, more or less consistently, by its leaders and by the men in the ranks. Reynolds is usually taken to represent the main current of the movement and to include much that was best in the work and ideals of his colleague. You feel in Gardner's style a treatment of his subjects not wanting in quiet solidity, in well bred accomplishment, in a not too penetrating analysis of character. Nothing is forced; there is always too that sense of leisure and of agreeable reserve that is rarely absent from the English work of this great group of painters. Those were days in which one's personality was more respected than now.

There is a pleasant color, expressive drawing not carried to the point of fervency, and always dignity in these capital little pastels. One is inclined to be grateful to the fact, cited by Mr. Fearon of the Cottier galleries, that in 1908, at a London auction, some one paid $6,550 for Gardner's pastel portrait of Lady Faulkener. It was this that brought Gardner out of his comparative obscurity. He will not be again forgotten.



THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. BY COLIN CAMPBELL COOPER.
A familiar subject at the new Academy of Design show.

In the course of a thoughtful and agreeable article in the *Print Collector's Quarterly*, dealing with the eighteenth century French engravers, George S. Hellman remarks the fact that it was largely due to the patronage extended and "the example set" by Philippe d'Orleans, the Count de Caylus, the Abbe de Saint-Nom and Mme. de Pompadour that continued impulse was given to the development of this branch of French art. And then he goes on to sound a rather true note of warning, or regret, that a similar procedure is not followed, upon a great scale, by some of the most conspicuous American collectors. It brings up the question, says Mr. Hellman, of what the contemporary society, and more specially the great collectors of any given nation, can do to make fertile the artistic life.

"This problem," he continues, "is one which we Americans have most signally failed to solve. There can be no quarrel with those lovers of beauty who collect the paintings of ancient masters, the canvases of the Barbizon school, the great works of Rembrandt and Durer, the delightful French engravings of the eighteenth century. Only if their collecting ends there must our disappointment begin. Only if the so-called Maecenases and the Lorenzos of to-day fail to realize that those great geniuses whom they would like to consider their prototypes were, indeed, the inspirers and patrons of contemporary and national endeavor, must we feel that there is something vitally wrong in the attitude of our wealthy collectors.

"Acquisitiveness • • • is not creativeness, and Lorenzo, who surrounded himself with and encouraged poets, scholars, architects, painters and craftsmen of every kind, not alone was interested in the work of the dead centuries but fostered the creations of his own living century. • • • The wealth and generosity of America are equal to both interests and it is high time that the primary and fundamental function of patrons of art should not be lost sight of in the secondary achievement of acquisition."

In the main Mr. Hellman is undoubtedly correct. But it may well be remembered that the spirit of to-day in America is that of democracy. While the patronage of leaders is always more effective than an equal amount distributed among purchases and encouragement proffered by less prominent buyers, there is no such reason for regarding the American artist as a neglected person as there used to be even ten or fifteen years ago. It is true that much remains to be done in the awakening of a more general recognition that the really accomplished men and women here are to be taken as seriously as anybody else. But on the whole, it is decidedly cheering to observe the rapidly spreading interest in what our own people are doing, in sculpture, in painting, in other fields of graphic art. Small buyers are numerous, as numerous, in fact, as the artists' prices will let them be. And it will be recalled that in one of the most admirable collections dispersed in this city in recent years, the Borden collection, sold a few weeks ago, there were several American landscapes of importance, which brought prices at least on a par with their quality.

There are too not a few men whose collecting of the work of their compatriots has been of measurable help and development here, men who are still active in this field. George A. Hearn and William T. Evans, to name two of the most conspicuous, have been and are positively influential in forwarding the movement of art production in America. And the successive acquisitions and dispersals of groups of pictures, by Mr. Evans, for example, have rather a stimulating than a depressing effect upon the body of creative art in this country. It evokes new chances for comparisons, for revaluations of work done, not merely money appraisals, though even these have their practical use, but also those weighings of things accomplished, that may stir the artists who take note of them to renewed efforts.

It is announced, by the way, that the latest sale of Mr. Evans's pictures will follow their exhibition at the American Art Galleries, which opens some ten days hence.

Without pushing the similarity too far it is worth noting that Fifth avenue has just been holding one painting exhibition devoted to the gardens of great English houses and another one given over to what may equally well be called portraits of rooms in the homes of distinguished or prominent people, here and abroad. In each the subjects possess interest in themselves of a sort and this has remained the principal element of attraction despite the efforts of each of the painters to have it otherwise.

The gardens have been portrayed by Miss Helen Carlisle of England, an artist known here for several years past, while the room interiors, devoid of figures, are the work of Walter Gay, one of the conspicuous Americans in the permanent colony in Paris. It is with the rooms that the reader is assumed, for the moment, to be chiefly concerned; they are at the Gimpel & Wildenstein gallery, while the gardens by Miss Carlisle have been at Knoedler's.

Mr. Gay appears here in a new guise with these studies of interiors. He was for many years a genre painter and a follower of worn out traditions in that sort of work. His pictures of the Duke of Sutherland's Stafford House hall, of an apartment in Paul Helleu's dwelling, of rooms whose likenesses have been lent for this occasion by Mrs. William K. Vanderbilt, Mrs. George Fearing, Jr., the Marquis de Ganay, Archer Huntington, Thomas F. Ryan, Lady Ripon and many others are intended to suggest something of the character and flavor conferred upon them by their owners.

You find here a table set for a meal, there a library that boasts what are evidently admirable paintings, and now a drawing room of grandiose proportions. As Henri Lavedan of the French Academy remarks in a flattering preface in Mr. Gay's catalogue:

"He portrays apartments; he studies the physiognomy of vestibules with their marble tilings; he traces the whole aspect, as well as the minutest characteristics of a boudoir; from the faded silks of a sofa he reveals gay memories, and betrays the confidences of a tabouret.

"These deserted rooms never give the slightest impression of being abandoned. We feel the presence of some one near by. Some one has just gone out, and some one is coming in. A window is half opened, a curtain moves, the blinds of a closed shutter are tinged by the warm rays of the sun: this very moment the family were still dining, and on the tablecloth the rumpled napkins still bear the traces of the fingers that have tossed them there."

One could wish that Mr. Gay's pictures, as shown here, really carried to the observer as much of imagination, or of delicate suggestion, as Mr. Lavedan has attributed to them. They are undeniably clever, and the idea behind them, while strictly descriptive, rather than expressive, was perhaps worth developing, especially for a French audience, more keenly alive than Americans to the little touches that arouse the pleasure of recognition.

Perhaps one reason that these do not make a firmer impression, as portraits of rooms, is because in so many cases the rooms themselves have had very little real personality. Expensive they certainly look, but conventional ideas rule in nearly all of them. Either this or the painter has sought to reduce them to a more or less definite level of fashionable elegance. You see rich stuffs, costly furniture, wall coverings that are of the grand manner and other marks of a certain well understood standard of luxury in furnishing. Mr. Gay unquestionably knows his subjects. But he has failed to make them more than superficially interesting, even looked at as illustrations of definite places, while as for the qualities of lasting beauty and allure, in the paint itself and in the manner of rendering what has been seen, these oils and water colors by Mr. Gay have them only in modest proportion.

Now and again you meet passages in which there is handsome color, but these are rare. One of them is found in "The Red Sofa," with its deft presentation of the fabrics and its neat indication of upholstered surfaces. You find it again in parts of a picture which the Luxembourg owns and has been prevailed upon to lend, a study in blue and white, with a mantelpiece and rows of china. You encounter it less surely in the picture from the Metropolitan Museum, "The Green Salon," and yet you feel that this quality may after all be present in some measure.

But when you have gone the round of the Gimpel & Wildenstein gallery, among a throng of interested spectators talking mainly about the people whose rooms are shown, it is not a memory of things high or potent that remains with you. You do not believe, if you agree with the present writer, that Mr. Gay has done these pictures, these portraits of interiors, with more than a moderate feeling for their possibilities as a basis for emotional work. He has just told the facts, in a pleasing, superficial way, with careful detail but with scarcely a hint of the real beauties latent in the best of the rooms. You do not once experience the sensation of standing before an important or really illuminating work. These things want force; they lack conviction.

If you would practise some one of the fine arts and yet be a traveller, in the way of business adopt etching. Did it ever occur to you that nearly all of the prints by masters of the needle and the copper plate, even those of old masters, dealing with themes that are not figure subjects are carefully labelled as to the exact location of their subjects?

How many etchings can you recall in which, for example, some such title as "Sunset" or "Morning" or "Rain on a River" would have been sufficient? Even Whistler tells you that he is depicting the Thames or some particular street in Paris or a glimpse of the Rialto or what not. It is apparently inherent in this form of art, this precision as to whereabouts and identity. If the title had failed to supply the fact that it was Shere Mill Pond that Sir Seymour Haden drew so richly upon his metal plate, would the print have been any the less beautiful? Yet it may be doubted whether its popularity would have been so facile, so general, without the distinguishing name.

The domination of subject, in art, has been cast off sooner in one department than another, it seems. You do not ask, in looking at a painting of some New York street corner containing no familiar landmark, that the author tell you just where he stood before you can accept it. Perhaps the answer is the usually greater definition obtained in etching than in painting in oils. The aspects of objects are more closely followed, because there is not so much freedom possible in handling the medium itself. A reasonable conformity to what the eye, anybody's eye, could see in some phase of the subject chosen for an etching seems by common consent to have been adopted as the standard.

You hear of Cubists in sculpture, in architecture, as well as in painting, and the same is true of drawings in black and white, but so far as the writer has observed the Cubists and other varieties of radical experimenters have not tried their hands at etching in these new styles. Possibly the use of the needle entails too sure a knowledge of what you are going to do next to suit the exuberant tempers of some of these impetuous spirits who deal in pure color and in forms that seem haphazard at times. In that case etching and its kindred arts may play a part of valuable conservatism in keeping the balance while these interesting experiments are going on.

The importance of geography in etching is suggested by the current exhibition at the galleries of Arthur H. Hahlo & Co. of some forty or fifty prints by the American Donald Shaw MacLaughlan, including a dozen plates that are new. They carry you from France and Italy to Holland and Germany. They embrace scenes by the Thames, they take you to the hill country of Asolo, where Giorgione flourished. The Alps are not neglected, but this Boston born man of Scotch ancestry seems particularly at home in Venice. As you look at his visions of one fascinating place after another his travels in pursuit of his art may be freely envied. Here is a man who makes his way about the world by portraying its pleasant places.

Mr. MacLaughlan's recent plates are headed by a large one having a Venetian setting for its fanciful theme. Before a doorway opening upon a canal floats a gondola laden with fruits and flowers, in which are also two nudes, while another nude stands in the arched doorway of the building looking forth upon the richly freighted barge. The architectural beauty of the building's facade, with its balcony and doorway, has been handsomely realized in the etching, and the composition as a whole has decision. Mr. MacLaughlan is a bit profuse in his line at times; he evidently thinks and sees in generous terms. This is apparent also in many of his other designs. There is a deal of ornament; the statements are made oftimes with redundancy. In paint this would no doubt look rather old fashioned.

But under this lavishness there is a skeleton of solid and sinewy pattern. He knows how to let the sterner lines expose themselves now and again when they will count at their utmost. This he does in his "Tivoli," with its abundant trees and foliage in the foreground, while the town itself, perched on a hill across the valley that lies between it and the observer, is discovered in outlines that speak plainly and with firmness, almost with severity. Again, there is a somewhat similar proof of the structural soundness of this American etcher's style in his print entitled "Giorgione's Land," with its strategically placed group of buildings at the summit of the distant hill and the softer elements of the composition nearer at hand.

Not yet wholly winning, this work of MacLaughlan, yet so good that it commands respect and furnishes enjoyment of a positive kind.

To complete the record, it may be mentioned that Mr. MacLaughlan is about entering his prime; he is about 36 years old, and from his portrait of himself, which is done in dry point and is one of the most vigorous things here, there is a martial aspect in his countenance that augurs well for his staying powers. By his own account of his methods he draws directly upon the copper plate from nature, and often he makes many studies of movement before he begins the final plate itself. Before starting a plate from which he expects to take a print this etcher has every line planned in his mind and even the kind of print necessary.

Of one of his plates of two years ago, the "Lauterbrunnen," MacLaughlan wrote to Messrs. Hahlo & Co. that he spent several days drawing it, climbing up the mountain at dawn and returning only at evening.

CHILDREN OF THE WIND. BY VAN DEARING PERRINE.
An expressive landscape in the spring academy show.

PORTRAIT OF MRS. ROBERT LIVINGSTON BY LOUIS MARK IN THIS HUNGARIAN ARTIST'S EXHIBITION AT THE KNOEDLER GALLERY.